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CJ has Diabetes

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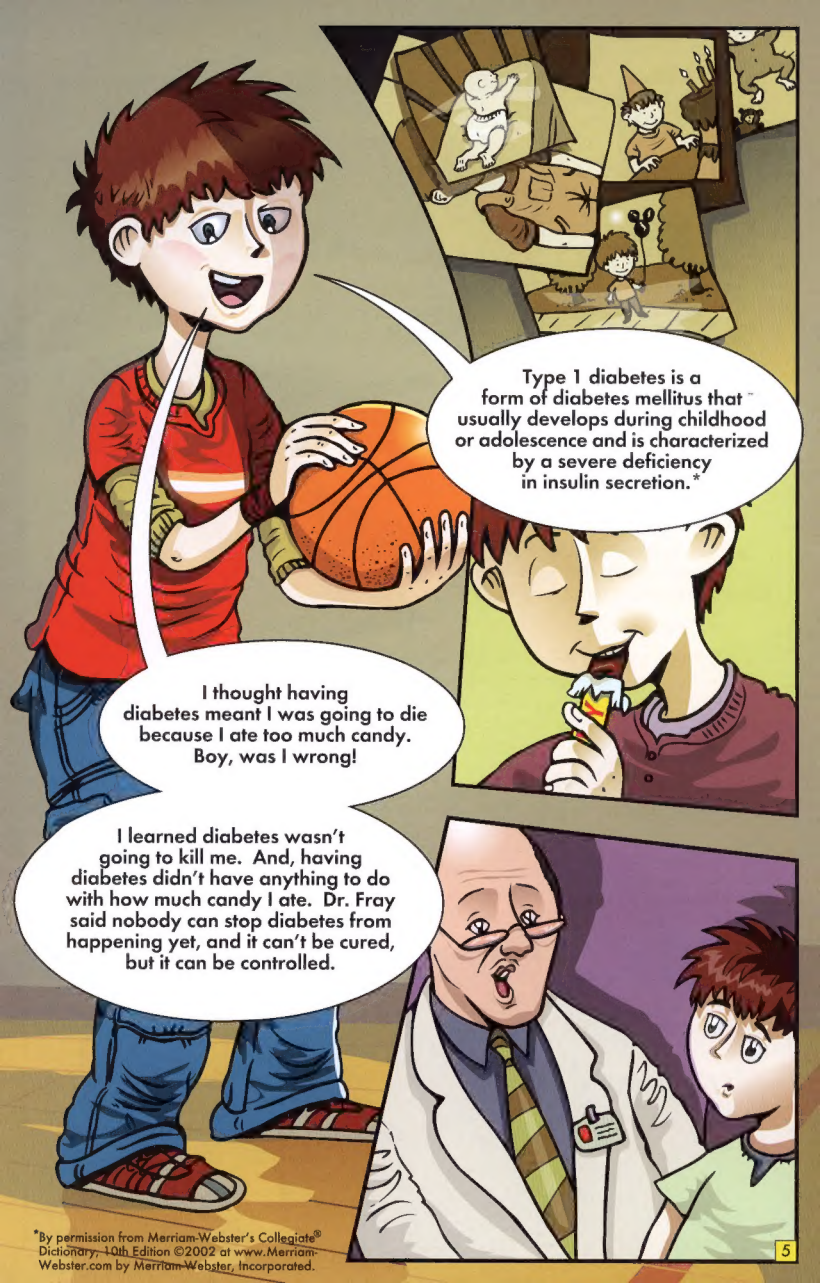
Hi, my name is CJ. I play basketball and run on my school's track team. My favorite sandwich is peanut butter and banana. I live with my older sister Jennie, my younger brother Cooper, our dog Bunker and my parents. I also live with diabetes.
When I found out that I had diabetes, it changed everything for me. At first, I was scared and so was my family. But once I learned how to control my diabetes, life got a lot easier. You can learn to control your diabetes too.
I want to tell you what it was like for me and my family during the first year that I had diabetes. I hope that it helps.

The day I went to the doctor and found out that I had diabetes was awful. I had been feeling weird for a few weeks...
I can't get enough water!
I have to go again?
I'm so tired. I just don't feel well at all.
...so Mom took me to the doctor.

Dr. Mitchell knew right away...
Common Signs of Diabetes
• Frequent trips to the bathroom
• Thirsty all the time
• Weight loss
• Blurry vision
• Tired all the time
• Strong, fruity breath odor
• Loss of appetite and/or vomiting
You've got the classic symptoms of diabetes, but let's do a blood test to make sure.
The blood tests are positive. That means you have diabetes.
Since your blood sugar is so high, you need to go to the hospital.
I've never spent the night in the hospital before.

Mom called Dad on the way to the hospital and somehow he beat us there! I was still feeling lousy when I was taken to my room. I was glad when I saw it had a TV.
We're going to help you learn what you need to do, so you can feel better.
Cool.
Hello. I'm Dr. Fray. I'm an endocrinologist. That's just a fancy name for a doctor who treats people with diabetes.
Over the next couple of days you'll be learning about your diabetes with a group of experts. They'll be your diabetes team.


Type 1 diabetes is a form of diabetes mellitus that usually develops during childhood or adolescence and is characterized by a severe deficiency in insulin secretion.*
I thought having diabetes meant I was going to die because I ate too much candy. Boy, was I wrong!
I learned diabetes wasn't going to kill me. And, having diabetes didn't have anything to do with how much candy I ate. Dr. Fray said nobody can stop diabetes from happening yet, and it can't be cured, but it can be controlled.

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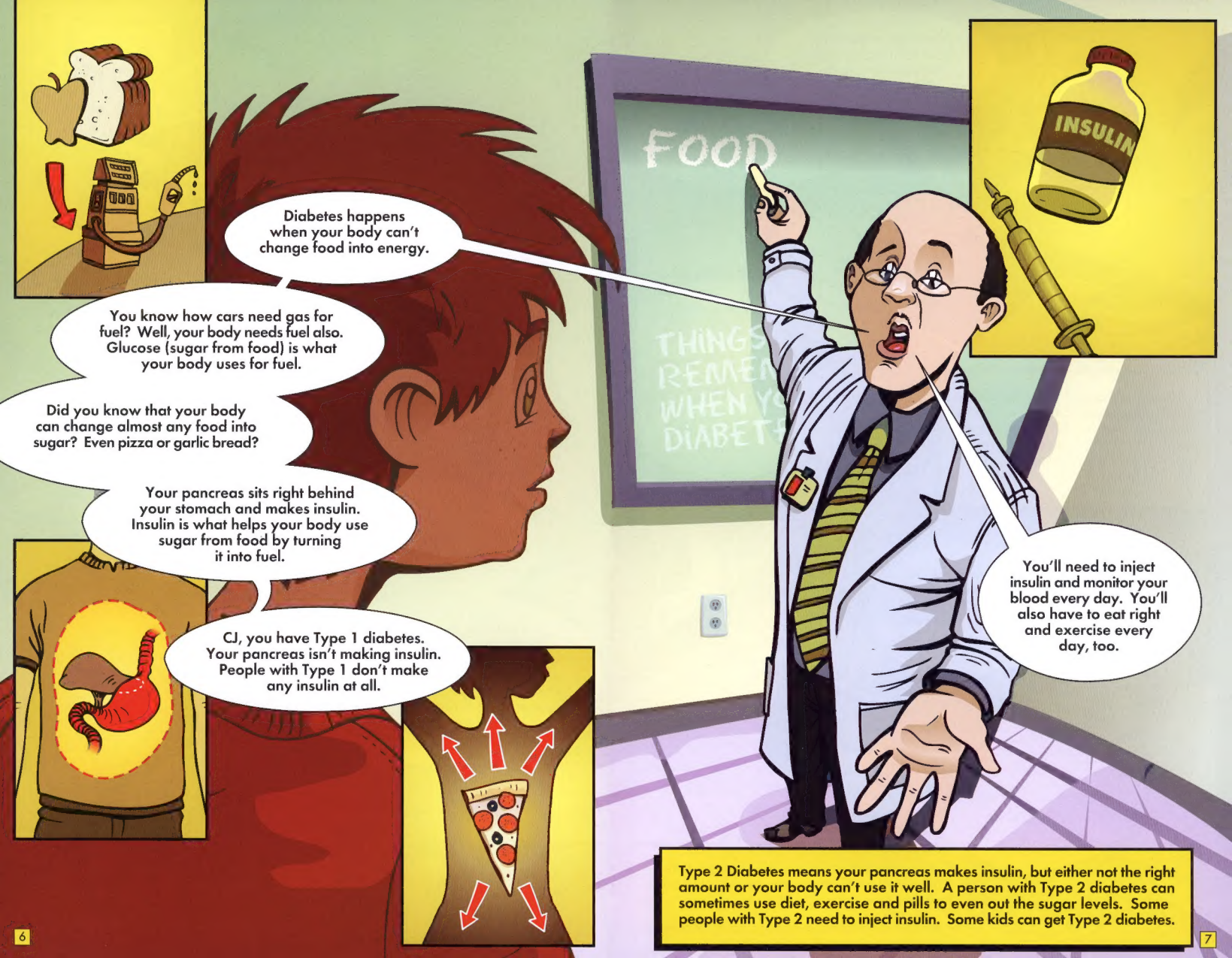

Diabetes happens when your body can't change food into energy.
You know how cars need gas for fuel? Well, your body needs fuel also. Glucose (sugar from food) is what your body uses for fuel.
Did you know that your body can change almost any food into sugar? Even pizza or garlic bread?
Your pancreas sits right behind your stomach and makes insulin. Insulin is what helps your body use sugar from food by turning it into fuel.
CJ, you have Type 1 diabetes. Your pancreas isn't making insulin. People with Type 1 don't make any insulin at all.
FOOD
INSULIN
You'll need to inject insulin and monitor your blood every day. You'll also have to eat right and exercise every day, too.
Type 2 Diabetes means your pancreas makes insulin, but either not the right amount or your body can't use it well. A person with Type 2 diabetes can sometimes use diet, exercise and pills to even out the sugar levels. Some people with Type 2 need to inject insulin. Some kids can get Type 2 diabetes.

You'll start learning how to manage your diabetes first thing in the morning.
Right now we'll use an IV to give you insulin.
I was kinda' afraid when the nurse said she was going to put a needle in my arm for an "IV," but then she explained that it wouldn't be too painful, and would actually help me feel better...
That didn't hurt... that bad.
This is the third time they've pricked my finger! Can't I just get some sleep around here?
They needed to know my blood sugar levels. I still didn't understand why they had to do that, but I was about to find out.

The next morning I met Carol. She is a CDE, which stands for Certified Diabetes Educator.
Before every meal, test your blood to find out how much glucose is in it.
Glucose, the technical name for sugar, is the fuel in your blood that gives you energy.
Knowing how much glucose is in your blood will help your doctor figure out how much insulin you need.

...next, Carol showed me how to use a glucose monitor.
104
mg/dl
This measures your blood sugar level.
Here is your diabetes kit.
I'll give you this insulin injection, but you or your parents will do the next one. You can practice doing this on a piece of foam.

Sports and exercise help burn up fuel, lower blood sugar and help insulin do it's job.
Make sure you check your blood sugar levels before and after exercising.
If you exercise a lot you might need to also check your blood sugar about 6-8 hours later.
Sometimes you might need to eat an extra snack or take less insulin.
You'll get to know what your body needs and this will all get easier.

Hi CJ, my name is Stephanie. I'm your dietitian.
Dietitians look at your food likes and dislikes to put together a meal plan that works for you.
We want you to eat the same way any healthy kid should!

One of the most important parts of following a healthy meal plan is counting the carbohydrates you eat.
Carbohydrates are in foods like bread, cereal, fruit, milk and certain vegetables, like corn and peas. The body turns these foods into glucose.
What kinds of activities do you normally do?
What do you normally eat?
...then Stephanie helped me set up a healthy meal plan.

Later that day Dr. Fray came in with some good news.
You can go home tomorrow. But I need to talk to you about Hyperglycemia and Hypoglycemia before you leave.
What are those?
Hypoglycemia is low blood sugar.
It can happen if:
• you don't eat enough
• your meal is late
• you skip a meal or snack
• you take too much insulin
Hyperglycemia is high blood sugar.
It can happen if you:
• eat too much
• don't get enough insulin
• don't exercise
• get sick
The last night in the hospital I couldn't sleep. I wished I could go back in time and make this not happen to me. Everybody else could do whatever they wanted whenever they wanted. Not me. I felt sorry for myself–but more than that, I wanted to feel better and learn how to stay healthy.

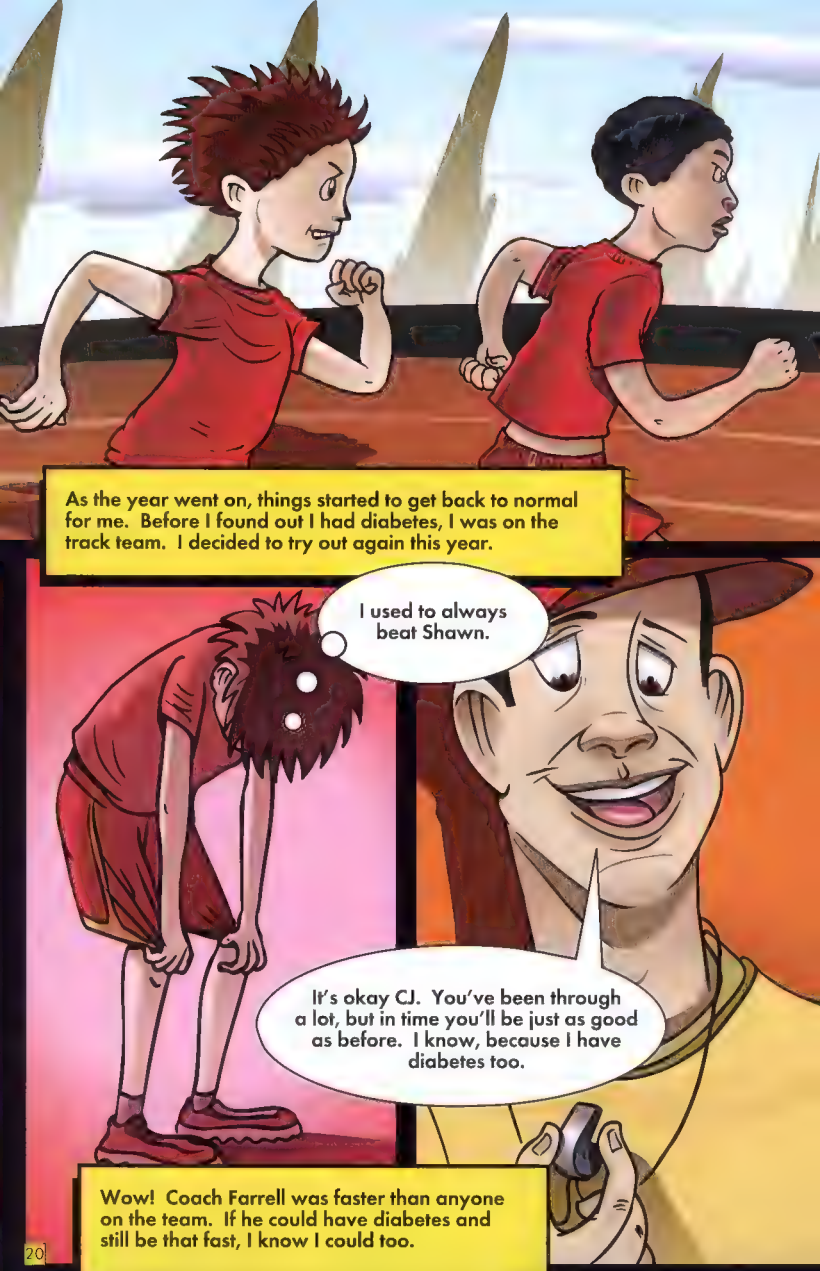
Good morning CJ, I'm Maria, your nurse for today. It's time for you to check your blood sugar.
I don't want to check my sugar.
I felt the same way when I learned I had diabetes.
I like knowing she can really understand what I'm going through.
You know CJ, we aren't alone either. Every hour someone is told they have diabetes. And, over 1 million Americans have type 1 diabetes.
Later that day, I left the hospital. When I got home, we had a special family dinner. I was glad to be home, but I was feeling sad. I just wished things could go back to how they were before.
Worst of all, I had to go back to school the next day. What were my friends going to think?

I was nervous about going back to school. My parents and I had a meeting with my teacher, Mrs. Mayfield, because I was out of school for a few days.
I think diabetes should be the first thing we talk about. That way everyone can ask questions. You're very brave CJ.
Everyone was asking where I was last week. I didn't want to tell them because I thought they would think I was some weird sick kid. What if they thought they could catch it from me?

Class, I know you all are wondering what happened to CJ last week. He was in the hospital and found out he has diabetes. So we are going to spend the first few minutes of class talking about diabetes.
CJ, why don't you tell the class a little about diabetes.
I was so nervous, I didn't know what to say.
CJ, how do you check your blood sugar?
And that's how it went. They asked questions and I answered them. It made me feel good that they were curious, but not scared. They weren't treating me like I was weird. They just wanted to learn about diabetes.

Soon enough the holidays were coming up. At first, I thought it would be hard. No candy for Halloween. None of mom's famous sugar cookies for Christmas. And, I knew other members of my family would come from out of town to visit. I didn't want them to fuss over me.
It wasn't that bad, after all. My brother and sister shared their Halloween candy. We each had 1 piece everyday after dinner...
...and mom figured out that each cookie has 1 carb choice so I could include them...
...but my family still fussed over me and said they were 'sorry.' I hated that part.

After the holidays, my blood sugar levels went a little crazy. And I did everything right!
Different things can affect your blood sugar levels. Some of these things can't be controlled.
• Stress
• Growing
• Being Sick
It turns out that I had a growth spurt. After that, I got back on track with my blood sugar goals. I learned that being in control was my goal, not being perfect.


As the year went on, things started to get back to normal for me. Before I found out I had diabetes, I was on the track team. I decided to try out again this year.
I used to always beat Shawn.
It's okay CJ. You've been through a lot, but in time you'll be just as good as before. I know, because I have diabetes too.
Wow! Coach Farrell was faster than anyone on the team. If he could have diabetes and still be that fast, I know I could too.

Later that summer after school was out, I went to a camp for kids with diabetes. It was so cool! We did a lot of things.
The great thing about camp was, everyone there had diabetes, even some of the counselors and staff.

Almost all of my days are good ones now. I still have bad ones and get angry sometimes. But I guess that's part of growing up with diabetes.
Luckily, I have a great family and medical team to help me.
I hope my story helped you. I have to go now, or I'll be late for school.

LIVING WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

Here is some information to share with friends, family and with your class. You can make copies of this sheet so you can share it with all of them.

What is diabetes?

It is a disease that prevents your body from properly using the energy from the food that you eat.

What is insulin?

It is a hormone that helps your body use glucose (or blood sugar) for energy.

What is glucose?

Glucose is the fuel in your blood stream.

Is diabetes contagious?

NO!

How do you get diabetes?

That is still a bit of a mystery. There are a lot of different causes. It is not the person's fault that they have it, though. And there is nothing that they can do to keep it from happening.

Symptoms of diabetes are:

- Increased thirst
- Needing to go to the bathroom more often
- Weight loss
- Drowsiness
- Loss of appetite and/or vomiting
- Strong fruity odor on breath

How do you treat diabetes?

Well, each person is different. But, but by checking your blood sugar levels, and controlling them with medication and activity you should be able to keep diabetes under control.

Is diabetes very common?

Unfortunately, yes. Right now it is estimated that over 1 million Americans are living with type 1 diabetes, and a combined 17 million Americans are living with either type 1 or 2 diabetes.

RESOURCES

Diabetes 123/Children with Diabetes
5689 Chancery Place
Hamilton, OH 45011
Website: www.childrenwithdiabetes.com
E-mail: info@childrenwithdiabetes.com
Fax: (513)755-6797

Diabetes Camping Association
Therese Gibson, Executive Director
Diabetes Camping Association
9 Pine Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912
Website: www.diabetescamps.org
E-mail: Thereseg@toadmail.com
Phone: (301)891-3163
Fax: (301)891-3157

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International
120 Wall Street
New York, NY 10015-4001
Website: www.jrdf.org
E-mail: info@jrdf.org
Phone: (800)533-CURE(2873)
Fax: (212)785-9595

American Diabetes Association
1701 North Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311
Website: www.diabetes.org
E-mail: AskADA@diabetes.org
Phone: (800)342-2383

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